



Evidence That Jesus and The Original Aramaic Christians Were Vegetarians, By James Bean

Also see, Vegetarianism in Early Christianity:
https://ivu.org/history/christian/christ_veg.html

And, also see, The Ebionites (Essenes who, early on, populated the Jesus Movement):
<https://www.biblicaltraining.org/library/ebionites>

“As long as Man continues to be the ruthless destroyer of lower living beings, he will never know health or peace. For as long as men massacre animals, they will kill each other. Indeed, he who sows the seed of murder and pain cannot reap joy and love.”
(Pythagoras)

“Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.” (Albert Einstein)

“Be on guard, so that your hearts do not become heavy with the eating of flesh and with the intoxication of wine and with the anxiety of the world, and that day come upon you suddenly; for as a snare it will come upon all who dwell upon the surface of the earth.”
(Jesus, Luke 21:34, Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe—Old Syriac-Aramaic Manuscript of the New Testament Gospels)

“Go and find out what is meant by the scripture that says: ‘It is kindness that I want, not animal sacrifices.’”

(Jesus, Gospel of Matthew 9:13, Good News translation)

Below you will encounter vegetarian sayings of Jesus from many sources—canonical and extra-canonical—along with a collection of passages revealing that the Apostles of the Jesus Movement were also vegetarians, following in the footsteps of their spiritual Master. In addition, I include examples of pro-veg passages from some early church fathers and many other writings too.

The carnistic premise or bias of Western church tradition about eating meat is really based on European dietary customs, but they have made use of a couple of verses from the orthodox New Testament in order to reinforce their already established preference for eating meat.

For those not acquainted with Judeo-Christian history and the various collections of writings or scriptures from the early centuries A.D., at first glance, or at least on the surface, it appears that Jesus ate fish and John the Baptist dined on insects. Certainly European Christianity portrays it that way. The uninformed Sunday school notion of the disciples of Jesus forever remaining fisherman lives on in the minds of many.

When it comes to vegetarianism and Christianity the first question people always ask is: “In the scriptures aren’t there passages describing Jesus as serving fish on a couple of occasions, as well as eating lamb during

the Jewish holiday known as Passover?" They have inherited the belief that Jesus was a meat-eating-Messiah. Some might also cite a verse about John the Baptist eating insects (locusts).

Dueling Gospel Traditions—Pro-Meat and Pro-Veg

There are two traditions within Buddhism: pro-meat and pro-vegetarian. Each have their own sutras or scriptures.

The same is historically true with Christianity: the original Jesus Movement or Hebrew Christians (sometimes called Aramaic Christians, Ebionites or Nasoraeans) with their gospels vs. scriptures associated with Paul and what evolved into the Roman church.

The Gospels of the Hebrews and Ebionites describe a vegetarian ethos: a vegetarian Jesus and vegetarian Apostles, a John the Baptist who ate carob (locust beans)—beans not bugs! and a rejection of ritual animal sacrifice, be it in pagan temples or the Jewish temple of Jerusalem.

For the followers of Paul, dropping the vegetarian dietary requirement of the Jesus Movement was a way to make it easier to get more converts around the Roman Empire.

In Sikhism as well we see a similar kind of shift away from the earlier vegetarian ethics of the founder, Guru Nanak, towards meat-eating gradually getting adopted by orthodox Sikhism after the time of the Tenth Sikh Guru.

In each of these cases the original spiritual movements were vegetarian, but later versions of these paths eventually accommodated the diet of the larger cultures around them swelling their ranks.

For most, living their busy lives and not interested in difficult research anyway, this is an all-too-complicated history of Passover lambs eaten or not eaten, locusts vs. locust beans, and other “fishy” choices made by certain gospel manuscript copyists adding extra servings of fish to the menu. Most stay stuck with whatever diet and beliefs they’ve grown up with. Change (metanoia) is not their way. So on the question of diet they just

see what they wish to see

and change shall never be.

Those on a spiritual quest seeking truth are sometimes more flexible and willing to change. ***Only a compassionate heart will figure this out.***

What About Those Pesky ‘Fishes and Loaves’?

The original version of the “Feeding of the Multitude” story only refers to bread, not bread with fish. “Fish” apparently got added to some gospel verses later on. Keith Akers points out the existence of different versions of the biblical story—the Feeding of the 5,000 or the Multitude:

“If you look at other accounts of the same incident... If you look, for example, at the Early Church Fathers, who also talk about these stories, Irenaeus mentions the feeding of the 5,000. Eusebius also mentions that, and Arnobius, another early church writer also discusses Jesus’ feeding of the multitude, the miraculous feeding of the multitude.

“And in every case they discuss the bread but they don’t mention anything about fish. So I think that fish is a later addition. In fact, if you even look at the New Testament, it says, at another point, when Jesus is talking about the feeding of the five thousand, he says, ‘Don’t you remember when I fed the multitudes and all the bread that we took up?’ ***And he doesn’t mention the fish.***” (Keith Akers’ website: www.CompassionateSpirit.com) Also see: Keith Akers, Was Jesus a Vegetarian? <http://www.compassionatespirit.com/wpblog/2015/12/01/was-jesus-a-vegetarian>)

Matthew 16:9's Loaves Without Any Mention of Fish: “Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?” No fish included with the loaves there.

Mark 8:16-21—Again... another example of bread but no fish being mentioned in connection with the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

Iraneus lived during the Second Century and described in detail the Miracle of the Multitude being feed with bread. ***No mention whatsoever of fish. Eusebius and Arnobius also never mention ‘fishes with the loaves’, only the loaves.*** And now I've found two more references in early Christian apocryphal writings, again mentioning the bread but not the fish, as if in the New Testament they were reading at the time, the feeding of the five thousand story didn't include fish... because the ***‘fish’ hadn’t been inserted into Greek gospel manuscripts yet?***

As it now stands, in the New Testament Gospels: “The bread is everywhere present, but the fish only sometimes. This strongly suggests that the original tradition was about distribution of bread, not bread and fish. In the case of Matthew 16:9-10, the insertion of fish becomes obvious, because the editors of Matthew changed the original story to include fish but forgot to change Jesus’ backward reference.” (Keith Akers, The Fish Stories in the New Testament:

<http://www.compassionatespirit.com/wpblog/2012/01/31/the-fish-stories-in-the-new-testament>)

There are actually many examples of “textual variations” in the diversity of New Testament manuscripts, with words or phrases either being added or omitted. In New Testament manuscripts, while there are some textual variations throughout, by far, the majority of variations occur with the Four Gospels and the Book of Acts. See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_major_textual_variants_in_the_New_Testament

And see:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textual_variants_in_the_New_Testament

The most spectacular example of this is at the end of the Gospel of Mark, which has several different alternate endings depending on what manuscript one happens to be using:

“Manuscripts omitting Mark 16:9-20
Manuscripts adding a shorter ending after verse 8
Manuscripts adding a shorter ending and verses 9-20
Manuscripts adding verses 9-20
Manuscripts adding verses 9-20 with a notation
Manuscripts adding verses 9-20 without divisions”

See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_16#Scholarly_conclusions

So it's interesting to notice that fishes are not always included with the loaves in the various accounts of the "Feeding of the Five Thousand" mentioned in the New Testament gospels and other sources.

An Important Observation About the Fish Symbol:

"...We should maybe keep in mind that fish was a well known mystical symbol... The Greek word for fish (Ichthys) was used as an acronym whose initials in Greek stood for 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior'." (Ted Altar, Did Christ at Least Eat Fish? https://ivu.org/history/christian/christ_veg.html)

In any case, "It's not where you've been; it's where you're going," as the saying goes. Many of us have changed our diets upon adopting a spiritual path or converting to a new religion. While several of the disciples are described as having been fisherman, and there are clearly a few references to fish in the New Testament gospels, we find Jesus saying to his new friends: "**Come, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men [fishers of people, souls,].**"

(Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:17) So rather than remaining fisherman, perhaps operating an imagined Jesus Fish Company of Galilee—some sort of lifelong career as fisherman, in other words—RATHER THAN THAT—what we do find is those individuals adopting a new spiritual path, being transformed into disciples and eventually even becoming spiritual teachers.

Scroll down to see the section below titled: The Vegetarian Apostles (Leadership of the Original Jesus Movement).

Rather than more fish metaphors, a variety of different sources in early Christianity described these Apostles as being vegetarians***, as they got older, becoming the founders of various spiritual communities as the successors of Christ, focused on the teachings of Jesus.

***** “John never ate meat.” “James, the brother of the Lord, lived on seeds and plants and touched neither meat nor wine.” The Apostle Thomas: “He continually fasts and prays, and abstaining from the eating of flesh...” “...The Apostle Matthew partook of seeds, and nuts, hard-shelled fruits, and vegetables, without flesh.” Peter said, “I live on olives and bread, to which I rarely only add vegetables...” “The unnatural eating of flesh meats is as polluting as the heathen worship of devils...” (Peter, Clementine Homilies)**

We even get to directly hear from some of those Apostles in various early Christian writings: gospels, acts, revelations, spiritual discourses, homilies, and letters of Peter, James, John, Thomas, Bartholomew, Barnabas, The Teaching of the Twelve, etc... See the online e-library,

Early Christian Writings:

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com>

In the Ebionite scriptures there are no more descriptions of young disciples of Jesus being involved in fishing or eating fish. In the Ebionite scriptures there are no accounts of Jesus eating fish or miracles of multitudes being feed fish. There are no descriptions of Jesus consuming the flesh of any animal. Rather, those contain sayings of Jesus condemning the eating of meat. (See: The Ebionites:

<http://www.compassionatespirit.com/wpblog/category/religion/ebionites>)

According to the Gospel of the Ebionites, Jesus rejected the Passover meal: “I have no desire to eat the flesh of this Paschal Lamb with you.”

Furthermore, in the Ebionite scriptures Jesus condemned animal sacrifice in the temple of Jerusalem and sought to forever bring that practice to an end. The Ebionite or Hebrew Gospel quotes Jesus as saying, “I have come to abolish the sacrifices, and if you cease not from sacrificing, my wrath will not cease from you.” (Panarion 30.16.5)

Below see the sections titled, Jesus Stopping Animal Sacrifice in the Temple, The Biblical Basis For Vegetarianism, and, Uncovering a Vegetarian Jesus (Yeshua) at the Beginning of Christianity.

See, The Acts and Teachings of the Ebionites: The Recognitions of Clement:

<http://compassionatespirit.com/Books/Recognitions/Recognitions-TOC.htm>

See, The Acts and Teachings of the Ebionites: The Clementine Homilies:

<http://compassionatespirit.com/Books/Homilies/Homilies-TOC.htm>

Was John the Baptist Really A Bug-Eater?

Another example of translators deliberately trying to add meat to the menu (the canon of scripture) is the strange case of John the Baptist and his alleged diet of locusts. From wiki answers:

“There has been a long-standing confusion in the etymological origin of the word locust. Locust is both a bean from the carob plant and an insect. The Greek word for cakes or bread made from the flour of the carob bean is ‘egkrides’ and the Greek word for locust the insect is ‘akrides’.

“John the Baptist belonged to a group of ascetics who believed in repentance and in leading an austere lifestyle. The carob bean was seen as the diet of the lower class who normally endured hardship and exploitation from the priestly class. **So we can**

conclude that JTB [John the Baptist] ate (locust plant) seed from the carob tree."

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Why_did_john_the_baptist_eat_locusts_and_wild_honey

According to the Hebrew-Ebionite Gospels, John the Baptist really ate locust (carob) beans and carob bean flour:

“Probably the most interesting of the changes from the familiar New Testament accounts of Jesus comes in the Gospel of the Ebionites description of John the Baptist, who, evidently, like his successor Jesus, maintained a strictly vegetarian cuisine.” (Bart D. Ehrman, Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew, pp. 102, 103)

Says Robert Eisenman in, James the Brother of Jesus, p. 240—“John... was both a ‘Rechabite’ or ‘Nazarite’ and **vegetarian**”, p. 264—“One suggestion is that John ate ‘**carobs**'; there have been others.

Epiphanius, in preserving what he calls ‘**the Ebionite Gospel**', rails against the passage there claiming that **John ate ‘wild honey’ and ‘manna-like vegetarian cakes dipped in oil. ... John would have been one of those wilderness-dwelling, vegetable-eating persons’**”, p. 326—“They [the Nazerini] ate nothing but wild fruit milk and honey—probably the same food that John the Baptist also ate.”, p. 367—“We have already seen how in some traditions ‘**carobs**' were said to have been the true composition of John's food.”, p. 403—“his [John's] diet

was stems, roots and fruits. ***Like James and the other Nazirites/Rechabites, he is presented as a vegetarian ...***.

Another Form of Locust or Carob Beans:

<https://www.naij.com/397241-7-healthy-benefits-of-locust-bean-iru.html>

Beans, not bugs!

Christianity Before Paul (The Original Hebrew Christians or Ebionites) and the Essene Connection

The editing out of vegetarian sayings, (scroll down and see below the reference to the Aramaic-Syriac translation of Luke 21:34, Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe), adding fish to the Feeding of the Five Thousand in second century Greek manuscripts, and translators choosing the word “locust” instead of carob, giving John the Baptist an unusual diet of bugs, are all troubling examples of slanting the translations or tampering with texts—adding meat to the menu. We know that Roman culture and later European church traditions were OK with eating meat. ***What interests me however is the diet of Jesus and the first Christians, not the dietary preferences of Roman translators of manuscripts centuries later.***

It needs to be said that the familiar Western or European canon of scripture seemingly allied with Saint Paul, does not even claim to be representing the teachings of the Apostles, the original inner circle of Jesus's disciples, the first Christians.

Paul did advocate that it was OK for new converts to eat meat, but he himself supplies us with evidence in his own letters ('epistles') dating back to the early decades of the First Century AD (around 50 AD) that others in early Christianity disagreed with him about diet and many other issues. It turns out that Paul dropped the vegetarian requirement for his new gentile converts. If you read his New Testament Epistle to the Galatians closely, you can notice there was quite a bit of tension between Paul and the original Jesus Movement based in Jerusalem ('the others'). In his writings Paul gives them 'left-handed compliments,' calls them "weak," "of the circumcision," and even "Judaizers." Clearly, he was not close to them but had a strained, frosty, distant, awkward relationship with the original disciples of Jesus. Given their solid credibility and affiliation with Jesus however, Paul couldn't completely come out and denounce them, but he does greatly marginalize them. They are barely mentioned at all. There's a few short writings not authored by Paul near the end—at the back of the book—not many of their scriptures got included in the New Testament.

Those in the Jerusalem part of the Jesus movement, Jesus' own family and spiritual successors headed by the Apostle James the Just, the brother of Jesus and next leader of the Aramaic-speaking Jerusalem community, were all vegetarians. They disagreed with Paul's sect about diet, believing that Jewish and gentile followers of Jesus, including new converts, should all be vegetarians, and have nothing whatsoever to do with religious rituals pertaining to animal sacrifice ("eating meat that has been sacrificed to pagan idols").

How could it be that Jesus' own family, the actual group of direct, spiritual successors and first disciples, would have it all wrong about diet, and forms of Christianity that were founded decades and centuries later, got it right? The truth of the matter is that the Hebrew gospels did not portray Jesus as eating fish or Passover lamb, and in those gospels, John the Baptist did not eat any insects. Paul's group, and those sects that emerged later on in Europe claiming succession from Paul, had their literature, but so did the Ebionites, the Hebrew Christians. There were pro-meat gospels as we all know, but there were also vegetarian gospels: the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, Hebrew Loggia of Matthew, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Nazarenes, the Gospel of the Ebionites, and other Ebionite literature including the Clementine Homilies and the Recognitions of Clement, a kind of Ebionite Book of Acts. These are not 'channelled' or recently composed writings, but scriptures that have long been

known to scholars and were used by other branches of Christianity from the Middle East in antiquity. What survives of these scriptures can be found on the shelves of most seminary libraries. Sometimes these books are called “extra-canonical writings”, “apocrypha”, or “lost books of the Bible.” These are books of someone else’s Bible or collection of scriptures—in other words, sacred texts once used by other forms of Apostolic or indigenous Christianity long ago in Israel, Syria (Mesopotamia), Turkey (Asia Minor), Egypt, Ethiopia, the Mediterranean region, etc...

The Jewish Christians called themselves “The Ebionites.” “Ebionite” is a word derived from Hebrew meaning: “The Poor,”, and were the first Christian community described in the New Testament Acts of the Apostles (4:32–35), a spiritual or intentional community that shared all of their possessions in common.

The Biblical Basis For Vegetarianism

The Genesis ideal presented in the early chapters of the Hebrew Bible is vegetarian. The Plant-Based-Diet of Eden:

“Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing herb which is upon the surface of the entire earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; it will be yours for food.”(Hebrew Book of Genesis 1:29, a translation quoted at a vegetarian Kabbalah website)

Only after the 'Fall of Man' and post 'Flood' phases begin is there meat-eating according to Genesis, and ritual animal sacrifice.

Quite often, spiritual movements advocating going back to Eden, re-entering a heavenly paradise, entering into a golden age, millennium, kingdom of God, or mystical reunion with God include vegetarianism as part of their spiritual path. From the beginning and across the many centuries there have always been vegetarian Jewish movements, the Nazarites, Essenes, Sethians, Therapeuta and many others.

The Essenes were one of the three major branches of Judaism, and predates Jesus and Christianity at least by a couple of centuries. During the First Century AD, the Essenes were opposed to animal sacrifices being made in the Jewish temple and they were also known to be vegetarians. The Essenes were the group that Jesus and the first Christians, the Ebionites, were closest to, sharing with them many of the same values and sacred texts. Unlike the Sadducees and Pharisees, the Essenes are never criticized in the New Testament. The Hebrew church was largely populated by messianic Essenes.

This earlier Essene movement within Judaism adhered to a vegetarian diet, and had also been opposed to animal sacrifice in the temple of Jerusalem. That is the context within Judaism. The Essenes (of Dead Sea Scrolls fame), the John the Baptist group, the

Mandaean Gnostics (also known as Nazarenes, Nasuraiia or Nasoraeans) and the Jesus movement had much in common and are related to each other. For instance, followers of the original Jesus movement are sometime called Ebionites, and that term Ebionite also appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Scholars continue to debate the exact nature of their relationship. In any case, these groups shared many of the same values, scriptures, and spiritual beliefs.

A Vegetarian Ideal Described by Isaiah in the Book of Isaiah 11:6-9

The prophecy described in the Hebrew Bible, the Book of Isaiah 11:6-9 foresees a return to a vegetarian world like that described in the earliest chapters of the Book of Genesis—back to Eden, where the cow, bear, snake, and the children of humanity coexist in peace. Lambs and wolves will feed together and lions will be vegetarians again:

*“The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.”*

The New Testament Book of Revelation 21:4 adds: “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no

more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

For the Essene branch of Judaism (of Dead Sea Scrolls fame) the Book of Isaiah was a very central text. Many copies of it were discovered at the Essene library of Qumran. Isaiah was a favorite text of the Hebrew Christians as well, along with another book known as the Ascension of Isaiah.

Dr. Will Tuttle, author of, *The World Peace Diet*, once told me that for most of the last two thousand years those who have been either vegans or vegetarians have been called "Pythagoreans", till relatively recently in history when terms like "vegan" and "vegetarian" got coined. Such has been the lasting legacy of Pythagoras upon the West. Though in the Greek world of antiquity, the Pythagoreans were a significant influence on many—were major advocates of vegetarianism and discontinuing religious ritual animal sacrifices in various temples—from passages such as Genesis 1:29, Isaiah 11:6-9, Hosea 6:6 and others, one can understand why ***Jews and Christians during the late B.C. and early A.D. period could easily see a Biblical basis for their vegetarianism.***

If the way of peaceful vegetarianism is the Divine ideal—“Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done”—why postpone it for millennia,

relegating it to some far away time in the deep distant future? Why not follow the examples of the Essenes and Ebionite Christians and step into this vegetarian ideal today, catching a glimpse of the golden age or paradise right now in the living present? #AssistingIsaiah #BackToEden

A Reflection About Saint Paul's Leniency For New Converts

“So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don’t want to cause another believer to stumble.” (Paul, 1 Corinthians 8:13)

As we see below, the Gnostics were vegetarians, as were some of those early Catholic/Orthodox church fathers. Both held Paul in extremely high regard, so how could Paul really have been the enemy, the opponent of vegetarian Christians? Maybe he wasn’t. Perhaps at the heart of his dispute with the original disciples of Jesus and Jerusalem Apostles was how he wished to structure his new community of gentile believers. Some in early Christianity developed a two-fold or two-level organisational approach of:

- 1) “Hearers of the Word”, new converts to the faith, and
- 2): “the Elect”, those initiates of the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven more mature who were “being perfected in love and knowledge” adhering to a stricter discipline that included vegetarianism.

Some successors of Paul certainly did follow this two-fold or two-tiered approach in their communities, including the part about the Elect initiates adhering to a vegetarian diet. I suspect Paul did too.

The Hebrew Christians however did not have a two-tiered format: one for new converts or gentile believers, and another for Jews more established in wisdom and knowledge. They only had the one level and ethical standard for all.



Uncovering a Vegetarian Jesus (Yeshua) at the Beginning of Christianity

Epiphanius quotes their gospel, the Ebionite or Hebrew Gospel, as ascribing these words to Jesus: '***I have come to destroy the sacrifices***' (Panarion 30.16.5), and as ascribing to Jesus' rejection of the Passover meat (Panarion 30.22.4), and these are analogous to numerous passages found in the Recognitions and

Homilies (e.g., Recognitions 1.36, 1.54 and Homilies 3.45, 7.4, 7.8).

Baptism Instituted in Place of Sacrifices: But when the time began to draw near that what was wanting in the Mosaic institutions should be supplied, as we have said, and that the Prophet should appear, of whom he had foretold that He should warn them by the mercy of God to cease from sacrificing; lest haply they might suppose that on the cessation of sacrifice there was no remission of sins for them, He instituted baptism by water amongst them, in which they might be absolved from all their sins on the invocation of His name, and for the future, following a perfect life, might abide in immortality, being purified ***not by the blood of beasts***, but by the purification of the Wisdom of God." (Recognitions 1.39)

The Ebionite or Hebrew Gospel quotes Jesus as saying, "***I have come to abolish the sacrifices***, and if you cease not from sacrificing, my wrath will not cease from you." (Panarion 30.16.5)

According to the Gospel of the Ebionites, Jesus also rejected the Passover meal:

"Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?"

To which he replied:

"I have no desire to eat the flesh of this Paschal Lamb with you."

Jesus Stopping Animal Sacrifice in the Temple

“The dispute over vegetarianism in the early church shows that the leadership of the Jerusalem church was vegetarian. The later history of Jewish Christianity indicates that Jewish Christianity was vegetarian and preserved this tradition of defending animals. Jesus’ attack on the animal sacrifice business demonstrates that Jesus himself shared these views.” (Was Jesus a vegetarian?

<http://www.compassionatespirit.com/wpblog/2015/12/01/was-jesus-a-vegetarian/#more-2512>)

“When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ***In the Temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves*** and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords and drove all from the Temple, both ***sheep and cattle***; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ***To those who sold doves he said: 'Get out of here.'*** (John 2:13-16)

Most remember the part about Jesus overturning the tables of the money changers in the temple, but the pro-meat bias most have inherited makes it more

difficult to get the significance of the anti-animal sacrifice/freeing the animals aspect of the story.

“Go and find out what is meant by the scripture that says: ‘It is kindness that I want, **not animal sacrifices.**’” (Jesus, Gospel of Matthew 9:13, Good News translation) Here Jesus was referring to a passage in the Hebrew Bible that was very popular with the Essenes, the vegetarian branch of Judaism that rejected sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem. Hosea 6:6: “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings.”

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.” (Gospel of Matthew, a saying attributed to Jesus from a Syriac-Aramaic manuscript)

This same old Syriac-Aramaic manuscript also preserves a vegetarian saying attributed to Jesus. I find it fascinating that both the saying above and this one appear to be slightly longer in this manuscript than their counterparts in the Greek New Testament, and the Greek manuscripts of Luke have the vegetarian part of Luke 21:34 edited out.

A Vegetarian Saying of Jesus in the Old Syriac-Aramaic Manuscript of the Gospel of Luke: “Be on guard, so that your hearts do not become heavy with the eating of flesh and with the intoxication of wine and with the anxiety of the world, and that day come upon you suddenly; for as a snare it will come upon all who dwell upon the surface of the earth.” (Jesus, Luke 21:34, *Evangelion Da-Mepharreshe—Old Syriac-Aramaic Manuscript of the New Testament Gospels*)

One of the earliest Ebionite Christian documents is the Clementine Homilies, a work based on the teachings of Saint Peter. Homily XII states:

“The unnatural eating of flesh meats is as polluting as the heathen worship of devils, with its sacrifices and its impure feasts, through participation in it a man becomes a fellow eater with devils.” (Saint Peter, Clementine Homilies)

Paul however was OK with the practice of eating meat sacrificed to idols that came from various pagan temples. But, like their Essene ancestors, the original Jesus Movement categorically rejected this. The author of the Book of Revelation in the New Testament also denounced this practice. See Book of Revelation 2:12-17: “There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate meat sacrificed to idols...”. This passage from Revelation actually contradicts other verses in the New Testament

authored by Paul. But... as I mentioned earlier, Paul might have had a different approach where it was OK for new converts ("Hearers of the Word") to continue eating meat, for awhile at least, but perhaps he had in mind a stricter moral code and spiritual discipline for those growing more mature who eventually would be perfected in love and knowledge (gnosis).

The Vegetarian Apostles (Leadership of the Original Jesus Movement)

The first followers of Jesus, also known as Ebionites or Nazoreans, were not only kosher, but also strictly adhered to a vegetarian diet. The largest surviving collection of Ebionite scriptures is the Clementine Homilies and the Recognitions of Clement, which are vegetarian gospels that condemn animal sacrifice in any form. For example, the Book of Homilies states that God does not want animals killed at all (3.45), and condemns those who eat meat (7.4, 7.8). And the passages below also show that the Ebionites' diet was vegan—plant-based (no eggs, no dairy, and no animal products mentioned).

"And the things which are well-pleasing to God are these: to pray to Him, to ask from Him, recognising that He is the giver of all things, and gives with discriminating law; to abstain from the table of devils, **not to taste dead flesh**, not to touch blood; to be washed from all pollution; and the rest in one word,—

as the God-fearing Jews have heard, do you also hear, and be of one mind in many bodies; let each man be minded to do to his neighbour those good things he wishes for himself." (Clementine Homilies 7.4)

“They [the Apostles] embraced and persevered in a strenuous and a laborious life, with fasting and abstinence from wine and meat.” (Eusebius, church father, Demonstratio Evangelica or “Proof of the Gospels”)

More from Saint Peter: Peter said, “I live on olives and bread, to which I rarely only add vegetables.” (Clementine Homilies 12,6; also see, Recognitions 7,6) And the earlier quoted vegetarian verse attributed to Peter is worth repeating again here: “The unnatural eating of flesh meats is as polluting as the heathen worship of devils, with its sacrifices and its impure feasts, through participation in it a man becomes a fellow eater with devils.” (Saint Peter, Clementine Homilies)

Matthew: “And happiness is found in the practice of virtue. Accordingly, the Apostle Matthew partook of seeds, and nuts, hard-shelled fruits, and vegetables, without flesh.” (Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, Book 2, Chapter 1)

The Apostle Thomas: “He continually fasts and prays, and abstaining from the eating of flesh and the drinking wine, he eats only bread with salt, drinks only water, and wears the same garment in fine weather

and winter, accepting nothing from anyone, and gives whatever he has to others." (Acts of Thomas, chapter 20)

"John never ate meat." (Church historian Hegesipp according to Eusebius, History of the Church II 2:3)

James the Just, Brother of Jesus, Head Apostle and the Next Leader of the Church, was a Vegetarian

Jesus had a brother. He's referred to by scholars and historians as "James the Just". According to a wide variety of sources, James became Jesus's spiritual successor, the next leader of this group, referred to as the "Hebrew Christians" or "Ebionites".

"James was a vegetarian." (Prof. Robert Eisenman in, James the Just, The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls)

"James, the brother of the Lord, lived on seeds and plants and touched neither meat nor wine."
(Epistulae ad Faustum XXII, 3)

"James, the brother of the Lord was holy from his mothers womb; and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh."(Hegesippus, quoted in The Church History of Eusebius, book 2, chapter 23)

And furthermore, wouldn't everyone in Jesus's family—brothers and sisters—be following the same diet and ethical code? On what planet would parents raise one child vegetarian from birth but another gets raised as a meat-eater?

Keith Akers makes some great observations in his article, Was Jesus A Vegetarian? "Eusebius says that James the brother of Jesus was a vegetarian, and in fact was evidently raised as a vegetarian (Ecclesiastical History 2.23). Why would Jesus' parents have raised James as a vegetarian, unless they were vegetarian themselves and raised Jesus as a vegetarian as well? Eusebius also states (Proof of the Gospel 3.5) that all **the Apostles abstained from meat and wine.**"

And James became the successor of Christ and next leader of the Jesus Movement! The Gospel of Thomas, Saying 12: "The disciples said to Jesus; 'We are aware that you will depart from us. Who will be our leader?' Jesus said to him, '**No matter where you come, it is to James the Just that you shall go,** for whose sake heaven and earth have come to exist.'"(Bently Layton's translation)

Though never seeing eye-to-eye with the original Jerusalem community on many things including the issue of meat eating, in his epistles even Paul the rogue Apostle, confirms this leadership role of James the Just, "the Lord's brother" in Jerusalem, and he

himself went to visit him to seek his blessings on a couple of occasions.

Church Fathers And Other Later Voices Affirming the Existence of the Earlier Veg Tradition

“Jacobus [James], the brother of Jesus, lived of seeds and vegetables and did not accept meat or wine.”
(Saint Augustine)

“The consumption of animal flesh was unknown up until the great flood. But since the great flood, we have had animal flesh stuffed into our mouths. Jesus, the Christ, who appeared when the time was fulfilled, again joined the end to the beginning, so that **we are now no longer allowed to eat animal flesh.**” (proto-vegetarian early church father Hieronymus [St. Jerome] who apparently read the Gospel of the Hebrews and was influenced by Ebionite views)

“The eating of meat was unknown up to the big flood, but since the flood they have the strings and stinking juices of animal meat into our mouths, just as they threw in front of the grumbling sensual people in the desert. Jesus Christ, who appeared when the time had been fulfilled, has again joined the end with the beginning, so that **it is no longer allowed for us to eat animal meat.**” (another version of the same passage attributed to Saint Jerome/Hieronymus)

“Sacrifices were invented by men to be a pretext for eating flesh.” (Clement of Alexandria)

Origen of Alexandria “...was a teetotaler and a **vegetarian** and he often fasted for long periods of time.” (Wikipedia, citing Greggs 2009, p. 102., and McGuckin 2004, p. 6.)

“The steam of **meat meals darkens the spirit**. One can hardly have virtue if one enjoys meat meals and feasts. **In the earthly paradise [Eden], no one sacrificed animals, and no one ate meat.**” (Saint Basil the Great)

Inter-Faith Love!

The following passage is from the Recognitions of Clement. This Ebionite Christian author has very nice things to say about those in India who worship One God, follow peaceful customs and laws, and are vegetarian or vegan. Imagine! Clearly he sees parallels between his own religion and that of his brothers and sisters “in the Indian countries.” This is one of the most amazing passages I know of in the extra-canonical scriptures, as it is a rare example of one religion (Ebionite, Hebrew Christianity) recognizing “Truth” in another religion (Hinduism), a rare inter-faith moment in human history. The Recognitions of Clement, and The Clementine Homilies are surviving Jewish-Christian texts representing an Ebionite vegetarian point of view:

*“There are likewise amongst the Bactrians, in the Indian countries, immense multitudes of Brahmans, who also themselves, from the tradition of their ancestors, and peaceful customs and laws, neither commit murder nor adultery, nor worship idols, **nor have the practice of eating animal food,** are never drunk, never do anything maliciously, but always fear God.”*

— Recognitions of Clement, Book 9, Chapter 22, Brahmans, Volume Eight, of the, Ante-Nicene Fathers, page 187, T & T Clark Eerdmans edition.

The Gnostics Were Vegetarians

Gnostic groups are described as being vegetarian. The Prayer of Thanksgiving, one of the Nag Hammadi books, mentions a vegetarian meal taking place at one of their meetings (a Hermetic or Gnostic sect). The Manichaean Gnostics were known for their vegetarianism. The Prophet Mani's parents were followers of the Elkasites, which was a slightly later Jewish-Christian sect related to the Ebionites. They were vegetarians. Mani was veg, and his inner circle of followers or initiates also were veg.

Elaine Pagels briefly discusses the connection between a veg Gnostic passage and Indian philosophy in her book, *The Gnostic Gospels*, quoting the early church father Hippolytus:

“There is...among the Indians a heresy of those who philosophize among the Brahmins, who live a self sufficient life, **abstaining from eating living creatures** and all cooked food... They say that God is Light, not like the Light one sees, nor like the sun nor fire, but to them God is Discourse, not that which finds expression in articulate sounds, but that of knowledge, or gnosis, through which the secret mysteries of nature are perceived by the wise.” (Hippolytus, Refutation Omnitum Haeresium)

Vegetarian Prayer of Thanksgiving in the Nag Hammadi Library (Gnostic Gospels) and Corpus Hermeticum

This the prayer that they spoke:

“We give thanks to You!
Every soul and heart is lifted up to You,
undisturbed name, honored with the name ‘God’
and praised with the name ‘Father’,
for to everyone and everything (comes) the fatherly
kindness
and affection and love,

and any teaching there may be that is sweet and plain,

*giving us mind, speech, (and) knowledge:
mind, so that we may understand You,
speech, so that we may expound You,
knowledge, so that we may know You.*

We rejoice, having been illuminated by Your knowledge.

*We rejoice because You have shown us Yourself.
We rejoice because while we are in (the) body,
You have made us divine through Your knowledge.*

“The thanksgiving of the one who attains to You is one thing:

that we know You.

We have known You, Light of mind.

Life of life, we have known You.

Womb of every creature, we have known You.

*Womb pregnant with the nature of the Father,
we have known You.*

*Eternal permanence of the begetting Father,
thus have we worshipped Your goodness.*

“There is one petition that we ask:

we would be preserved in knowledge.

*And there is one protection that we desire:
that we not stumble in this kind of life.”*

*“When they had said these things in the prayer, they
embraced each*

***other and they went to eat their holy food, which
has no blood in it.” ****

<http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/prat.html>

* **“Vegetarian food”**—footnote from the Marvin Meyer translation of this in, The Gnostic Scriptures.

This passage is also found in the Epilogue of Asclepius, in “HERMETICA,” translated by Sir Walter Scott:

“Having prayed thus, let us betake ourselves to a meal unpolluted by flesh [animalia] of living things.”

The G.R.S. Mead translation of the same verse: **“With this desire we now betake us to our pure and fleshless meal.”**

“With such hopes we turn to a pure meal that includes no living thing.” (Asclepius, translated in “Hermetica”, Brian Copenhaver, Cambridge University Press)

Some Early Church orthodox “Heresy Hunters” used to require meat-eating on Sundays as **a way to discover who the vegetarian Gnostics were in their midst!** Since Gnostics were generally vegetarians, anyone refusing to partake of fleshly meals would be suspected of heresy:

“While the initial cause for Gnostic vegetarianism has been unknown in the past, many classical Christian authors have documented the Gnostic’s widespread practice of vegetarianism. In a 4th Century Christian

document it attests that ‘Heretical Gnostic Christians were still so common, and there were so many Gnostic Heretics among the clergy and monks in Egypt that in the region of Theodosius Egypt, the Patriarch Timothy made eating meat compulsory on Sundays, as a way to flush out the vegetarian Gnostics.’” (Luke Meyers, “Gnostic Visions”)

Also see, “Vegetarianism and Christianity— are they compatible?” by Keith Akers:

<https://medium.com/sant-mat-meditation-and-spirituality/vegetarianism-and-christianity-are-they-compatible-a-blog-entry-by-keith-akers-467e015a3d67#.7y5mdvqzk>

Just found this online. The Mandaic (Aramaic) Book of John the Baptist: <http://rogueleaf.com/book-of-john/category/john-the-baptist>

Was Jesus A Vegetarian?

http://compassionatespirit.com/was_jesus_a_vegetarian.htm

For more about the vegetarian roots of the original Hebrew Christians, explore the Compassionate Spirit website run by Keith Akers:

http://compassionatespirit.com/was_jesus_a_vegetarian.htm

The Ebionite Book of Acts—The Clementine Literature:
<http://compassionatespirit.com/Books/Recognitions/Introductory-Notice.htm>

Vegetarianism in the World Religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Baha'i Faith), Courtesy of Supreme Master Television:
http://youtu.be/cU_s0wEjt84

Wisdom from the East

That passage above from Saint Basil the Great mentioning that meals of meat darkens the spirit reminds me of a saying of the Buddha: “The eating of meat extinguishes the seed of great compassion.”

The harshest words that Kabir, a great spiritual Master and poet-mystic from Northern India (loved by Sufis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Sants and Hindus alike) ever spoke were directed against the slaughter or consumption of innocent animals. Kabir says, “Keep away from the man who eats meat—his company will ruin your meditation.”

It’s hard to reach more subtle states of tranquility in meditation on an animal flesh diet based on the suffering of other beings.

“I must point out that animal food, even if a single particle is eaten, is detrimental to spiritual progress.”
(Huzur Baba Sawan Singh)

The following, on the reason why disciples of Santmat advocate following the vegetarian diet, is by Swami Santsevi Ji Maharaj from the book, The Harmony of All Religions (Sarvadharma Samanvy), published by Maharshi Mehi Ashram:

“The saints have addressed the sin of violence with particular attention to the foods which are eaten. Foods which are produced by killing living beings, as well as foods which are not pure and fresh, are considered tamasic. Consumption of these is prohibited by the teachings of the saints. This includes animal products such as meat, fish, and eggs. These foods inhibit the clarity of the mind and the health of the body. There is an old saying: ‘Whatever kind of food we take in, its properties will also fill our mind.’ A parallel saying is, ‘Whatever we eat, just so will our breath smell [indicates the visible effect of food].’

Further, Kabir Sahab says: ‘The kind of food and drink which we consume directly influences how our mind will become. Even the quality of water which we drink will influence our speech.’ These words of Kabir Sahib are not merely rhetorical conjecture, but represent direct experience...

“A great yogi named Bhupendranath Ji Sanyal has said: ‘It is preferable to always avoid the consumption of flesh and fish. This is because in the very cells of these animals there might be bad diseases. But even more significantly, the natural vibration of these creatures is absorbed into the blood. This can create agitation and

even sickness, and will destroy the natural calmness of the mind. Also, one must not take intoxicants, as this is a great breach of the spiritual path and natural duty (dharma). [Under the influence of intoxicants people are unable to discern the right path of action].'

"Therefore, we must be disciplined in what we eat and drink, and by being disciplined, our wealth and spiritual path are protected. This world becomes agreeable, and so does the next world, since we won't be incurring the karmas from killing other living beings." (Beloved Swami Santsevi Ji Maharaj, Sant Mat, the Path of the Masters)

All past and present Masters of Sant Mat, the most advanced Saints of Inner Light and Sound, advocate following the vegetarian diet. In fact, being vegetarian is a requirement in order to be initiated into the meditation practice of Sant Mat, Surat Shabd Yoga, Meditation upon the inner Light and Sound of God.

Sant Mat is a vegetarian Path for mystical, spiritual, ethical and theological reasons. The Masters teach that foods are of three kinds: Satvik, Rajsik, and Tamsik. This last category of foods, which includes all flesh foods, is to be completely avoided. Satvik (pure foods), the first category, includes: grains, beans, vegetables, fruits, seeds, and nuts. Satvik foods are considered by Mystics to promote relaxation, meditation, and spiritual experience.

The bad karma and other negative effects of flesh-eating darkens one's vision of inner Light, interfering with concentration and meditation. It's interesting to notice that the Satvik diet of Sant Mat, of Hinduism and the Yoga Philosophy of India is also: the life-extension diet, the anti-cancer diet, the diet for antioxidants and most of the other plant-based nutrients, AND the diet of the Light & Sound mystics, East and West.



